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The back issues of this journal are currently being digitized. While this is in progress you may find gaps in the range of available issues/volumes below.

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The initiative was developed through a partnership between the Wellcome Trust, JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) and the US National Library of Medicine.

In addition to the faithful replication of every published page, the archive provides a number of innovative value-added functions, including links from references to full text, high-resolution images, full-text searching across the entire archive, and links from the original article to corrections and retractions and vice-versa.

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Diary

2 July

Summer Picnic (Family Day)
Wakehurst Place (National Trust)

Contact: Mike Pierce

Email: mpeirce@rcgp.org.uk

Tel: 020 7173 6075

4 July

MRCGP Preparation Modular Course
Shillingford Bridge Hotel near Wallingford

Contact: Sue Daniel

Email: tvalley@rcgp.org.uk

Tel: 01628 674014

12 July

Communications skills: improve your effectiveness and reduce your risk

Liverpool Medical Institution

Contact: Anna Reid

Email: mersey@rcgp.org.uk

Tel: 0151 708 0865

12 July

Dermatology Study Day Part 1

Royal Bournemouth Hospital

Postgraduate Centre

Contact: Carol White

Email: cwhite@rcgp.org.uk

Tel: 01264 355013

14 July

Music for St Swithun's Eve — a concert to celebrate the Life of Dr Roger Edmonds

Performing Arts Centre,
St Swithun's School, Winchester

Contact: Catherine Darlaston

Email: cdarlaston@rcgp.org.uk

Tel: 01264 355005

17 July

MRCGP Examination Preparation Course
Richmond Building, University of Portsmouth

Contact: Carol White

Email: cwhite@rcgp.org.uk

Tel: 01264 355013

19 July

North Wales Faculty Board Meeting
The North Wales Medical Trust, Clarence Road, Craig y Don, Llandudno

Contact: Angela Thomas

Email: nwales@rcgp.org.uk

Tel: 01492 877854

Neville Goodman

SEMICOLONIC IRRIGATION

The semicolon is misnamed; it is really a semi full-stop. The semicolon is used when two clauses that could be sentences (main clauses) are too closely related to be separated by something as bold as a full stop. (That full stop, unlike the first one, does not need a hyphen.) If you prefer, you can replace the semicolon with a conjunction: 'The semicolon is misnamed, because it is really a semi full-stop.' That is weaker, but at least you now know about colons as well. A colon is an introduction to what comes next.

Unlike a semicolon, a colon does not have to be followed by a sentence. Mrs Hewitt wants more women to have their babies at home: a recipe for disaster. It's also a cliché. To avoid the cliché, and use a semicolon, try, 'Mrs Hewitt wants more women to have their babies at home; this is not sensible.' A comma there would be wrong, because commas should not be used to separate main clauses unless there is also a conjunction (as in this sentence). If you wanted to use a comma, then 'Mrs Hewitt wants more women to have their babies at home, which is not sensible' is correct. Buried in these first two paragraphs are the rules of how to deal with commas, full stops and quotation marks, but you'll have to infer those because I don't have space.

Nobody who has been on an obstetric flying squad ever wants to go on another one. The best place for women to give birth is close to people who can help them if things go wrong. The lounge is not the place for torrential haemorrhage or asphyxiated babies. Mrs Hewitt has commissioned the Department of Health to do 'research to support the case for home births'. Not much risk of equipoise there, then. Not having a verb, that was not even a subordinate clause, never mind a main clause; but I think it worked better as a sentence than within a sentence and delineated by a colon.

Faced with a prime minister who described the judges' decision not to deport the Afghan hijackers as an 'abuse of common sense', is it any wonder that I am taking refuge in punctuation? You can use common sense; you can say something goes against common sense; you can't use common sense improperly, which is what abuse is. Once you learn about semicolons, it's easy to become addicted: three commas and a but would have done just as well.